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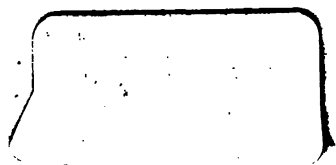
The Choice.

1859. 143



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143.





THE CHOICE:

THE

CHURCH,

OR THE

MEETING-HOUSE.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. G. & F. RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD,

AND WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL.

1839.

Price Fourpence.

143.



GILBERT & RIVINGTON, Printers, St. John's Square, London.

THE CHOICE.

IN a small village, beautifully situated on the banks of the Wye, stood the pretty cottage of John Williams. No one could pass the neatly-cut hedgerow, without stopping to admire the little garden in front, where grew the most beautiful flowers, with not a weed to disfigure the nice order and perfect arrangement so pleasing to look upon. The cottage itself was quite a little picture. The door, shaded with a kind of rustic lattice-work, was covered with woodbines and sweet-briar, while over the front of the house was trained the rose and the jessamine, filling the air with delightful perfume. Such was the outward appearance of this pretty residence, while within every thing corresponded with the order and neatness there observed. The floors were nicely cleaned, the chairs well rubbed, while the table gave evidence of the care bestowed upon it, by the brightness of its shining. The mantle-piece displayed a variety of useful tin ware, polished like silver, and in the corner cupboard was arranged a neat set of tea china, with some glasses and a handsome punch-bowl, with half a dozen silver spoons, and, to finish the whole, an excellent clock was at once the most useful and the most ornamental part of the furniture. Any one may well imagine that such an abode

was likely to contribute to the happiness of the family who inhabited it. And such was really the case; for neither John Williams nor his wife could have been comfortable in a cottage filled with dirt, confusion, and litter. One of their favorite maxims was, that "cleanliness was next to godliness," and on the two they framed the model of their lives.

Here, perhaps, it may be well to enter a little into the former history of the persons whose characters I am desirous of recording. John Williams had been for many years head gardener to a gentleman upon whose estate his pretty cottage was situated, and his excellent wife had almost from her infancy been brought up by the same family, and in the course of years she became the attached, humble, attentive companion of the lady who, from severe indisposition, was almost confined to the house, and having one only son, Mary Smith performed all the duties of an affectionate daughter; and from being constantly engaged in scriptural reading, joined to a great deal of instructive conversation and solid advice from her mistress, her mind became stored with those firm religious principles which in after-life proved so great a blessing to herself and family. At the death of her lady she became possessed of a small annuity, and having long been engaged to John Williams, with the full approbation of the family they both so faithfully served, she entered the marriage life, and took possession of the pretty cottage, which her master had furnished as a token of his approval of her conduct and attention to her lamented mistress. Years had passed away since this happy union took place, and their family consisted of a son and daughter, the former a young man of 18, who assisted his father in the gentleman's garden, and the latter about 16, who shared in her mother's domestic employments and in needle work, with which they were supplied from the hall. So much was this family respected and looked up to, that Mrs. Williams's opinion was usually consulted upon every occurrence

in the village : and from the circumstance I have mentioned of her mistress's instructions, her judgment rarely proved erroneous.

One lovely afternoon, in the latter end of April, Mary and her mother were sitting at their work, when a neighbour of the name of Susan Price entered the cottage. After taking a chair, she immediately began to inform them of her business: "You are always so kind, Mrs. Williams (she said), in giving your advice, that I thought I would just step in and ask your opinion about a place I am thinking of looking out for my Anne. She is rather older than your daughter Mary, and as I have such a large family, my husband says it is high time she should be earning her bread."

MRS. WILLIAMS. "That is very true. But there are many things which ought to be considered, before taking such an important step. In the first place, you would not like her to enter a family where her religious duties would not be attended to? It would be but of little avail for her to earn her daily bread, for the support of her body, if the bread of life for the nourishment of her immortal soul was neglected."

SUSAN PRICE. "Why that is very true; but my husband says 'beggars must not be choosers,' and if we can but get anybody to take her, he dares say she will do very well."

MRS. WILLIAMS. "That is much more than he can answer for. And it is a very dangerous experiment to place a young creature in the way of temptation, in the hope that she *may* escape it. The better plan is not to run such a risk; but to endeavour to find a service where her religious knowledge may be increased, her faith strengthened, and her principles made firm to resist those sins and wickednesses which are sure to spring up, even in the path of those who do not needlessly run into temptation."

SUSAN PRICE. "I wonder that did not strike me before, for I am sure it is quite my wish that she should do well; and I am very much obliged to you

for your good advice, which I shall be sure to follow, and will take care that Anne shall not go anywhere, but where she will be well looked after."

With this resolution Susan Price soon took her leave, and in about a week afterwards came with great joy to inform Mrs. Williams that she had succeeded in getting a place for her daughter, in a neighbouring city, and that the family were very religious indeed. She was in a great bustle, as Anne was to go the beginning of May, and she had many necessary preparations to make. As she left the cottage, Mrs. Williams shook her head, and expressed some doubt to her daughter how it might turn out.

MARY. "But why, mother, are you afraid that Anne should not do well?"

MRS. WILLIAMS. "Because, my child, she has not been brought up with the fear of God before her eyes. I should be sorry to speak ill of a neighbour, but you know as well as I do the examples she has had. Her mother is a good-humoured, kind-hearted person, thoughtless to a degree, and but too sadly indifferent to the 'one thing needful.' Caring for the things of this world, and striving to feed and clothe her large family, are the things which occupy all her attention; while her Saviour's command, 'Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,' is totally forgotten in the slavery to which she condemns herself. Then the father, wearied with toil, comes home and joins the family meal, without craving a blessing, and all retire at night without offering up a single prayer of thanksgiving to the God of all mercies for the blessings received, and rise again in the morning, and go forth to their work and to their labour, without one petition for a renewal of spiritual strength for the day on which they are entering."

MARY. "Oh! yes, that is very shocking; and I have talked to Anne about it, and she assures me she does say her prayers."

MRS. WILLIAMS. "Saying of prayers and praying are two very different things, and I fear it would be difficult to perform the latter in that house of confusion. Then the Sabbath. How is that observed? They call it a *day of rest*, and spend the greater part of the mornings in absolute laziness, and many of the afternoons in gossiping about from one door to another; and it is but now and then that they remember it is the *Lord's day*, and as such tread the courts of his house. This is but a bad foundation for a good and faithful servant to spring from, for if we have not been accustomed to obey a heavenly Master, how are we likely properly to serve an earthly one?"

MARY. "But poor Anne has thought more seriously lately, and I do think if she was removed from the bad examples she sees at home, she would become a very different girl."

MRS. WILLIAMS. "I sincerely wish this might be the case. She has received religious instructions at the Sunday School, and the good seed which is now choked with thorns, may yet spring up and bring forth fruit. Much will depend upon the mistress under whom she is placed. At home she has been so little used to obey, that she will find it very difficult to subject her own will to the commands of another. This is a sad error in many a too indulgent parent. They allow themselves to be coaxed into compliance with all the wishes and whims of their children, even from their tenderest years, and thus by degrees lose all authority over them, and the pert answer, with self-willed obstinate disobedience, soon follows. Then again, Susan Price has been still more guilty, for she has often screened her children from the displeasure of their father, by either inventing a falsehood herself, or by upholding them in theirs. In my mistress's family I have seen the evil effects of the want of the love of truth in servants in too many instances, not to be certain that no good place can be kept without that foundation. One untruth is obliged to be supported

by so many others, that the unhappy creature is soon found out, and the loss of place and character is the melancholy consequence, as no one will keep a person upon whose word they cannot depend. You see, then, my dear Mary, of what importance it is for the mother of a family to watch *her own* conduct, as a bad example does away with all the good instructions received from school or from books; for the evil seen practised at home is but too often carried into service, ready to break out whenever temptation offers."

Mary appeared much struck with her mother's last observation, and they remained for some time silent, and as her father then came in, the conversation was not resumed. Mary, however, saw her friend several times before she left the village.

Months passed on, and as the autumn began to appear, Mary and her mother were much pleased to see Anne Price enter the little garden before the cottage. Mary hastily threw down her work and ran out to meet her, expressing a lively joy at seeing her, for a warm friendship had subsisted between them, as they had attended the same Sunday School, and the same Church, and the same village path led to the home of each, and though poor Anne was never regular in any thing, and many an idle excuse was framed for staying at home, yet still whenever she did go, they went together, for the tidy, punctual little Mary never failed to call to see if she was ready, and often persuaded her to go, when her mother's neglect and her own inclination tempted her to remain at home. As soon, therefore, as Mary had welcomed her into the house, the warmhearted girl eagerly began: "Well, Anne, how do you like your place, and how do you get on?"

ANNE. "O! I like my place very well. To be sure there are some hardships, for my mistress is very particular, and will have her own way, and expects every thing to be done just as she likes."

MRS. WILLIAMS (smiling). "Why to be sure, Anne, that is but natural, as she of course hired you

to serve her in any way she might command, and it is your duty to obey her in all things, when not inconsistent with your duty to God."

ANNE. "That is the very thing I am come to talk to you about."

Mrs. WILLIAMS. "Indeed."

ANNE. "Yes. You know, when I was hired, my mother told you it was a religious family I was going into. Well, so they are, I suppose; and when I first went, we used to attend the Church very regularly, and we had some good books to read in the evenings. The cook was very kind to me, and often explained many little things, which to be sure I ought to have known myself, if I had not so neglected the Sunday School. I am sorry enough for it now, and I wish, Mrs. Williams, I had followed your advice in that matter. However, she soon found out how ignorant I was; so she instructed me in a quiet way; not by setting herself up as my teacher, but by asking me about the sermon (which was one way of making me attend to it), and when I could not give much account of what I had heard, she told me how she had been taught, and then we read all the chapter that the text had been taken from, and so we went on very comfortable together."

Mrs. WILLIAMS. "This is good news indeed! And I think, Anne, you should consider yourself very fortunate in having such a valuable fellow-servant."

ANNE. "Indeed I do; for I may say she is the best friend I have in the world, for she has twice saved me from losing my place."

Mrs. WILLIAMS. "How was that?"

ANNE. "I am ashamed to tell; but you have been always kind to me, Mrs. Williams, so I won't conceal my faults. Once I would have *my own way* instead of obeying my mistress; and once I was still more guilty,—I forgot all your good advice and that of my dear Mary, and told a falsehood."

MRS. WILLIAMS. "That was sad indeed."

ANNE. "Yes, in both I was quite wrong; for you had kindly warned me before I went, that obedience, truth, and honesty, would be always expected from me: and I so displeased my mistress, in the first instance, that she would have sent me home, but for the good word of the cook, and when I afterwards acted so much worse, and told an untruth, it was as much as my friend could do to prevail on my mistress to keep me. But the kind creature begged so hard for me, and even shed tears, when she went to my mistress, and told her how badly I had been brought up, and that it might be the utter ruin of me, to cast me upon the world in disgrace; and she pleaded so feelingly and so respectfully, that at last my mistress consented to give me one more trial. And I am sure it is a lesson I hope I shall never forget."

MRS. WILLIAMS. "You have given the best possible sign of true repentance by so freely confessing your faults."

Mary had listened most anxiously to this conversation; she said nothing, but a tear stood in her eye while she warmly pressed the hand of her friend.

ANNE. "I thank you, Mary, for that kind look; your good advice and example ought to have prevented my error."

MRS. WILLIAMS. "But you said you had something to consult me about."

ANNE. "To be sure I have, and I am coming to that part of my story: I told you my mistress was religious, and how comfortable we all went on at first. Well; now a great change has taken place, and my mistress wishes us never to go to Church again."

MRS. WILLIAMS. "Never to go to Church again! I am astonished beyond measure. What reason can she possibly give for such a request?"

ANNE. "She tells us that there is a person come into the town, who understands preaching the Gospel

much better than our clergyman, and that it is the duty of every body to leave his Church and go to a room to hear him."

MRS. WILLIAMS. "This is a serious business indeed, and upon such an important question, the opinion of man is vain. We must seek for guidance from a higher power." Mrs. Williams then took down her Bible and added, "You will find my dear Anne, we are not left without warning and instruction on this most vital subject. Hear what your Saviour says, 'If any man shall say unto you, Lo here is Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before; wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert, *go not forth*: behold he is in the *secret chamber, believe it not*¹.' This passage (continued Mrs. Williams) is to my mind a strong proof, that, except in our own private praying, we must seek for Christ by those appointed means which He has ordained, and in those appointed places where He has declared, 'If two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in the midst of them.' Those who separate themselves from this Church, are very fond of bringing this text forward as a proof, that in any assembly they choose to make to divide the Church, that the Lord is with them. But if they would read the whole of the 18th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, they would perceive that this blessed promise is given to the apostolic Church, and you must always remember that the *Church of England, is the Church of Christ in England, founded by him, and faithfully handed down by his Apostles from generation to generation.* In that Church the holy sacraments are duly administered by those He has called to be his servants, whose office it is to obey his

¹ Matt. xxiv. 23, and following.

commands, in calling men to repent of their sins and trespasses, and to bring back those who have gone astray from the fold of the true shepherd. Thus if a person has done wrong and refuses to listen to the remonstrances of his friends and relations, our Lord says, 'And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he shall neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.' Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' So you see this precious promise, given by our Lord to his Church, is picked out and selected from every thing which goes before and which follows after, and is used to deceive the simple and ignorant, and brought forward to countenance dissent and separation, put on as the sheep's clothing, by those who are the enemies of the Church of Christ; who say 'Lord, Lord,' but do not obey his words. You will observe, my dear Anne, that the ministers of the Church do not now presume to take upon them, or on their own authority to bind or loose the souls of their people. That can only be done by sincere repentance and faith; still they must ever remain the faithful guardians of that Church, and of those pure doctrines on which eternal life and death depends. They have an awful responsibility to fulfil, to guard the Church from every innovation; for Christ says, '*In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*' How fearful the reflection, that it is possible to worship Christ, and yet worship Him *in vain*; if that worship be not according to his doctrines and according to the unity, which it was his last prayer might distinguish those in this world who believed on Him. My good

mistress endeavoured to impress this upon my mind most deeply, and I do not know how often she made me read these verses from the 17th of St. John's Gospel, 20, 21, 'Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' O! Anne, does it appear a small offence to break this unity, and to separate from that Church, whose true foundation is Christ Himself. To me it seems like throwing myself out of the ark into the muddy troubled waters of discord, darkness, confusion, and death: raging waves of the sea foaming out their own shame.¹

ANNE. "What a frightful picture!"

MRS. WILLIAMS. "Yes; a very different one to the calm majesty and safety offered by Christ to all who firmly hold fast his promises, and abide in his word; 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask that ye will, and it shall be done unto you. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.'² And again, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. Even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.'³ Such are the gifts and promises vouchsafed by our Lord to his Church and people. St. Paul declares the same to the Corinthians, in his 2nd Epistle (i. 21, 22,) 'Now he which stablishes us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.' And to the Colossians he says, 'And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is

¹ John xv. 6, 7—10.

² Ibid. xiv. 15, and following.

the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleaseth the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and un-reprovable in his sight: if ye *continue in the faith grounded and settled*, and be not *moved away from the hope of the Gospel*, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister, who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the Church¹. And again, St. Paul says, 'Christ is the head of the Church, and he is the Saviour of the body: and Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of regeneration by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.' In the 7th of St. Matthew's Gospel and the 15th verse, our blessed Saviour says to his disciples, 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.' How worthy of observation are these few words; for you will notice our Lord distinctly marks such persons as *coming*, that is, they are not *sent* by Him, but they *come* of their own accord, and *set themselves* up as preachers and teachers on *their own* authority, and their business is to separate, and scatter, and divide the flock of Christ. This is exactly what is done by

¹ Coloss. i. 17, 18.

all such persons; for no sooner do they enter into a parish, than their first work is to speak against the minister of the Church and his doctrines, and by bringing forth many texts of Scripture (the sheep's clothing, as I before observed, by which they deceive the simple and ignorant), they speedily cause endless division and unhappiness, and many a peaceful contented village has become, by their ungodly influence, a scene of disorder, confusion, and endless contention. But Christ's sheep hear the voice of their own shepherd and follow him, and a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers¹. How melancholy it is to behold the fearful excesses to which pride, novelty, and a love of change, carry and delude many who were before quiet, sober-minded, well-meaning Christians; but dissent changes the whole character, and the fruits of the Spirit, which are 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance,' are changed for fierce and angry disputing, hatred, ill will, wrath, and strife, joined to a woful disobedience to all rightful authority human or divine, and a total disregard and forgetfulness of that beautiful promise, which Christ has given to the ministers sent by Him, '*Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen*'². I have several more marked passages on this vital subject, as it was one on which my good mistress often dwelt with peculiar energy, as she wished me to be always on my guard against being carried away by my own feelings, or being excited by the wild enthusiasm of others, instead of being firmly grounded and settled in the true religion of Christ. Look at those green silk ribbons, they all refer to the same subject, and I

¹ 1 John x. 5.² Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

have often found strength and comfort in pondering over the chapters again and again, aided by the remembrance of her caution from the 11th verse of the 3rd of Revelations, ‘Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown.’ She has likewise often explained and pointed out to me, how the golden candlestick had been removed from those early Churches, because they had been utterly unmindful of the doctrine revealed to them, and to the exhortations to repentance and firm faith, and were now enduring the calamities then denounced against them, by again sitting in almost heathen darkness. What a convincing proof that God is watchful, jealously watchful over the Christian Church, that punishment quickly follows a falling away from the truth, and taking up the doctrines of men. Thus the Spirit saith to the Church of Pergamos, ‘Behold, thou hast them which hold the doctrine of Balaam, and so thou hast also them which hold the doctrines of the Nicolaitanes, which things I hate :” and St. Paul says, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” How earnestly likewise he exhorts Timothy, ‘to take heed unto the doctrine, and to continue in it, for by so doing he shall save himself and those who heard him ;’ and in the chapter which preceded this, he says, ‘These things write I unto thee hoping to come unto thee shortly ; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the *House of God*, which is the *Church of the living God*, the pillar and ground of the truth.’ Our blessed Saviour thus warns his disciples, ‘Woe unto the world because of offences ! for it must needs be that offences come ; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh !”

ANNE. “Yes that is exactly what the cook goes upon. She says, we must not believe the voice of man whose breath is in his nostrils, when it is exactly contrary to the Gospel. And she declares she has

always been brought up to look upon the Church as the House of God, (as you have just now read to me) and therefore no *man* can be right who deludes the people of God to leave that 'which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.' I learnt that verse that I might not forget it."

MRS. WILLIAMS. "All who fall, must do so with their eyes open, or from a wilful blindness of heart. Our Lord Himself frequently warns us to beware of *false teachers*, and St. Paul speaks of them 'as false apostles, deceitful workers, *transforming themselves* into the apostles of Christ, as evil men and seducers, deceiving and being deceived, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,' and he strongly commands Timothy, '*from such to turn away!*' How true in every shade and colour is the vivid picture he paints with such a masterly hand, when guided by the divine Spirit he looks forward and proclaims the perilous times which should come upon the earth: 'when men should be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy;' and then he goes on to say, 'For of this sort are they which creep into houses and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.' 'For the time will come when they will not endure *sound doctrine*; but after their own lusts shall they *heap to themselves teachers*, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.' St. Peter also uses arguments equally forcible to point out the sinful delusion that should come upon the earth, which would overthrow the faith and constancy of so many¹. 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished. But

¹ 2 Peter ii. 9, 10, 18.

chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and *despise government*. Presumptuous are they, *self-willed*; they are not afraid to *speakevill of dignities*.' By all this, you see, false teachers were foretold by our Lord, and by his apostles; and the faithful followers of our Saviour who should come after them are warned of the dangers to which in all ages they would be exposed, from such persons coming amongst them. How rash and wicked then it is that any person, calling himself a Christian, should not believe the words of Christ: but when they see deceivers arise, exactly answering to the description given by divine inspiration; when they behold persons presumptuously vaunting and setting up themselves and despising the Church government established by our Lord and his holy apostles; when they hear them not afraid of speaking evil of dignities; that is, of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, the appointed ministers of Christ's Church here on earth; and when in addition to all this, St. John and St. Jude add their testimony, equally plain on this subject, we may well understand that exclamation of our Lord's, 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find *faith on the earth*?' for it surely must proceed from a total *want of faith*, that so many turn a deaf ear to such convincing arguments as these. St. Paul says, 'Beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who *separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit*;' and when St. John expressly declares, 'Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come (mark Anne, that word come) any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him *not into your house*, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him *God speed is a partaker of his evil deeds*.' With all

this chain of evidence, how wonderful it seems that any serious reflecting Christian should hear the word of God despised, the Book of Prayer openly condemned and set at nought, and contempt poured on Christ's holy sacraments; and yet should be led away by the words of weak erring men of to-day—men so exactly foretold and described in the Scriptures, and, deceived by vain and sinful reasoning in direct opposition to the word of truth, should leave the Church of Christ to follow such pernicious teachers, whose mouths, St. Paul says, ought to be stopped, as they subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not.' How much safer to obey the commands of our Lord and his divinely inspired apostles, and faithfully to follow their instructions. In these instructions there is no saying you *may* if *you like* do this or that; far from it; mark how St. Paul counsels the Thessalonians¹. 'Now we *command* you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us; for yourselves know how ye ought to follow us;' and again², 'We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.' When error once creeps in, how quickly one sacred truth falls after another; till that alarming blindness comes upon those forsakers of the right path, that 'God shall send them a strong delusion that they should believe a lie.'

ANNE. "That is very awful. And I am very sorry that my poor mistress should be so deceived, for I am quite certain she thinks she is doing right. But her head seems almost turned in going after these people."

MRS. WILLIAMS. "That is another striking proof of its fallacy, for one peculiar mark of Christ's religion,

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 6.

² 1 John iv. 6.

is its calm *soberness*, and scarcely any word is more frequently used by the apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul. 'Let the woman learn in silence, with all subjection; but I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man;' then follows the promise of salvation with this condition annexed, 'if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with *sobriety*.' How widely different is this to the busy turmoil of going from house to house, making converts to their new fanciful opinions, and utterly forgetful of their own domestic duties and of St. Paul's advice, 'to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed,' and 'that the young women be *sober*.' My good mistress used often to say that no children were more neglected, or more to be pitied, than those whose mothers were inflamed with zeal for spreading any new sect or doctrine, as while the active work of conversion was going on abroad, the unfortunate children were left at home to the care of servants,—frequently highly improper ones for the charge. And instead of having their tender minds imbued with firm faith in the doctrines of Christ's Church, they heard so many different opinions started at different times, that they grew up doubting the truth of *any* religion. Many and melancholy have been the results of such a neglected education; as it is in early youth that proper impressions are invariably the most lasting and most firmly retained. But when a child hears the Church, its ministers and its doctrines condemned, and sometimes one preacher followed, and then another; such a child is like a vessel launched out to sea without a rudder, an anchor, or a compass, and no wonder that a total shipwreck is made of all religion and virtue. Many a parent may date the loss of the souls of their children from their own folly in wandering from house to house, speaking things which they ought not, from which error (St. Paul informs Timothy) 'some are already turned after Satan.' My mistress always

cautioned her son never to choose a wife from such a family,' as no good could come from such a bringing up."

ANNE. "Well, that agrees exactly with the going on at our house. My master is often vexed to find the children have been left all the morning to the care of the nurse-maid, and everything in disorder and confusion when he comes home. And I heard him once say he wished my mistress's new *faith* brought forth better *practices*, as he thought *doing her duty* was much better than *hearing* strange doctrines, and persuading her friends to leave the House of God."

MRS. WILLIAMS. "Yes, all husbands agree pretty well in that opinion. And I hope, my dear Anne, that you are more than ever convinced that your line of duty consists in a steady adherence to the Church of Christ, in daily prayer for the renewal of the Holy Spirit, joined to a firm unshaken faith in the promises of your Saviour, 'upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Add to this, belief in your Lord's promises, a continual partaking of his holy Sacrament, for the strengthening and refreshing of your soul, with a hearty repentance for your past sins, and a lively dependence upon the grace of the Holy Spirit to enable you to perform your duty to God, your neighbour, and yourself; you will not then have your religion to find."

ANNE. "I have one more question to ask. Do you not think it is very wicked for such persons to administer the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper?"

MRS. WILLIAMS. "Certainly I do. And by St. Paul's warm rebuke to the Corinthians we may gather his opinion of the danger of profaning so sacred an institution. For (he says¹), 'there must be also heresies among you, that they that are approved may be made

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 19, 20, 22.

manifest among you. When ye come *together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper.* What, have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the *Church of God*, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.' What a precious gift (continued Mrs. Williams) is this book of the New Testament, for in it we may find an answer to every inquiry, graciously vouchsafed us by the pens of the Apostles, written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And from St. Paul's reproving the Corinthians for not devoutly keeping the ordinances as he had delivered them, we are instructed and warned of the danger of profaning the Lord's Supper, for 'for this cause (he says) many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep¹.' How wonderful does it appear that Satan so blinds the eyes of many people, that in spite of all the warning of our Lord and his Apostles, they turn from the truth to follow such teachers as the infamous Joanna Southcott, the impostor Toms, or any other pretended, self-appointed preacher, who sets himself up to cause divisions, disunion, and separations from the body of Christ; they follow their own inventions, and itching ears, and please themselves, disregardless of the counsels of the most High; 'thus a deceitful heart turneth them aside, so that they cannot deliver their own souls, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand².' In this long conversation you will perceive, my dear Anne, that I have not set up my own erring opinion. Every proof has been drawn from the word of God, as that is the only source of truth and experience, and history shows us that all these soul-destroying separations from the Church have arisen either from pride, insanity, or a desire to excite attention, to be the head of a party, and to awaken an unnatural excitement of feeling, which has nothing to do with the pure, calm, sober religion of Christ.

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 30.

² Isaiah xlv. 20.

‘To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word¹.’ ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their’s is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth².’ ‘Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose *faith follow*, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. Be not carried away with the diverse and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace³.’ Remember this advice. Keep to your own minister and Church, and never suffer yourself to leave the Rock of Christ, to build on the sandy foundation of any new sect or doctrine, to be tossed about like a wave of the sea, always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Bear in mind the answer once given to such daring pretenders: ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know: but who are ye?’”

Anne thanked Mrs. Williams most warmly for the pains she had taken, and took her leave with the full determination of remaining stedfast in the faith.

In conclusion I have only to add, that Anne and the cook much displeased their mistress by not leaving the Church for the meeting-house, and consequently left her service. About the same time the young gentleman at the Hall married, and an addition to the establishment being required, Mrs. Williams recommended Anne and her friend. They proved valuable dependents and truly religious characters, and never left the Hall till they settled respectably in life. The meeting party quarrelled amongst themselves, and a separation took place, some choosing one preacher and some another. Many, with humble and contrite hearts, returned to their Church, some joined themselves to a

¹ Isaiah lxi. 2.

² Matt. v. 3. 5.

³ Heb. xiii. 7, 8.

party of Unitarians, and some of the most zealous openly renounced the communion of the Church, and in becoming Papists found plenty of novelty to keep up the excitement of their heated imaginations.

The moral is obvious. "Hold fast that thou has that no man take thy crown¹."

¹ Rev. iii. 10.

THE END.





